

Assembly Bill No. 2479

CHAPTER 323

An act to amend Section 7271 of the Food and Agricultural Code, relating to noxious and invasive weeds.

[Approved by Governor September 18, 2006. Filed with
Secretary of State September 18, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2479, Cogdill. Noxious and invasive weeds.

Existing law provides that within the Department of Food and Agriculture Fund there is the Noxious Weed Management Account, the funds in which are made available to eligible weed management areas or county agricultural commissioners for the control and abatement of noxious weeds according to an approved integrated weed management plan. Existing law provides that only 5% of the funds in the account shall be made available to the Department of Food and Agriculture for carrying out provisions relating to management of noxious and invasive weeds, developing noxious weed strategies, seeking new biological control agents, conducting workshops, and appointing a noxious weed coordinator and weed mapping specialist.

This bill would make various findings and declarations regarding the impact of noxious and invasive weeds on California. This bill would increase the percentage of Noxious Weed Management Account funds that shall be made available to the department to 10%.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares each of the following:

(a) The spread of certain harmful, nonnative species of plants causes enormous damage to the environment and economy of California.

(b) The destructive impact of invasive and often poisonous noxious weeds is profound, affecting California's cropland, rangeland, forests, parks, and wildlands.

(c) Enormous sums of private, state, and federal resources are lost through decreased land productivity, degradation of wildlife habitat, and outright destruction of crops, livestock, wetlands, waterways, watersheds, and recreational areas caused by noxious and invasive weeds.

(d) The estimated lost crop and forage productivity caused by invasive and noxious weeds is \$33 billion nationwide, a large proportion of which is attributable to California.

(e) Noxious and invasive weeds have destroyed large portions of riparian habitat along creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other bodies of freshwater in California, damaging the integrity of riparian system by altering erosion, sedimentation, flooding, and fire.

(f) Proper noxious and invasive weed management in riparian habitats is critical to sustaining California's freshwater supply.

(g) The invasive weed *Arundo donax* (giant reed) has established large colonies across the state, most notably southern California, where one in 10,000 acre area of the weed has been estimated to have consumed more than 30,000 acre-feet of water each year, or enough water to meet the yearly freshwater needs of 150,000 persons. Over one million dollars (\$1,000,000) is spent annually on controlling *Arundo* in southern California.

(h) The invasive weed yellow star thistle has infested more than 20,000,000 acres, roughly 22 percent of the state, and is quickly expanding in the Sierra and into the Coastal Range, making it the most common invasive plant in California, choking out native plants and killing horses who eat its poisonous early season growth. Yellow star thistle consumes extra groundwater estimated to cost sixteen million dollars (\$16,000,000) to seventy-five million dollars (\$75,000,000) each year in the Sacramento River watershed alone.

(i) Tamarisk (saltcedar) trees, found along waterways throughout the arid west, including southern California, are estimated to cost between \$133 billion and \$292 billion nationally each year in lost water, flood control, hydropower, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

(j) California has a noxious weed management program for the purpose of managing and eradicating noxious weeds though specified local weed management areas. These programs to prevent, control, manage, and eradicate nonnative and noxious weeds have emphasized information sharing, education, and public awareness and participation as critical to the success of prevention, control, and eradication efforts.

(k) Local weed management groups have benefited greatly from the commitment of the state to fund weed eradication, and these weed management groups have been successful in identifying and eradicating invasive and noxious weed species in their regions.

(l) The California Noxious and Invasive Weed Action Plan, September 2005, calls for expanding funding for local weed management groups.

SEC. 2. Section 7271 of the Food and Agricultural Code is amended to read:

7271. (a) The Legislature designates the Department of Food and Agriculture as the lead department in noxious weed management and the department is responsible for the implementation of this article in cooperation with the Secretary for Resources.

(b) There is hereby created in the Department of Food and Agriculture Fund the Noxious Weed Management Account.

(c) Funds appropriated for expenditure by the secretary for purposes of this article may be spent without regard to fiscal year and shall be allocated as follows:

(1) Eighty percent of moneys in the account shall be made available to eligible weed management areas or county agricultural commissioners for the control and abatement of noxious weeds according to an approved integrated weed management plan.

(2) Ten percent shall be made available toward research on the biology, ecology, or management of noxious and invasive weeds.

These research moneys shall be made available to qualified researchers through a grant program administered by the department. Proposals shall be evaluated in consultation with the Range Management Advisory Committee, with emphasis placed on funding of needs-based, applied and practical research.

(3) Ten percent shall be made available to the department, and shall only be used for the following purposes:

(A) Carrying out the provisions of this article.

(B) Developing of noxious weed control strategies.

(C) Seeking new, effective biological control agents for the long-term control of noxious weeds.

(D) Conducting private and public workshops as needed to discuss and plan weed management strategies with all interested and affected local, state, and federal agencies, private landowners, educational institutions, interest groups, and county agricultural commissioners.

(E) Appointing a noxious weed coordinator and weed mapping specialist to assist in weed inventory, mapping, and control strategies.